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Review

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GÉRARD ZERBOLT DE ZUTPHEN, *Manuel de la réforme intérieure: "Tractatus devotus de reformatione virium anime,"* ed. and trans. (into French) Sr. Francis Joseph Legrand. Introduction by José van Aelst. (Sous la Règle de Saint Augustin, 8.) Turnhout: Brepols, 2001. Paper. Pp. 358 plus color illustrations; black-and-white figures. €45.

This is an edition of a major treatise from the *Devotio Moderna*, a religious movement that started in the eastern regions of present-day Holland in the fourteenth century. It was to dominate religious life in the Low Countries and central Europe until the Reformation. Like other reform movements of the later Middle Ages, the *Devotio Moderna* aimed for a return to the piety of the early church.

Without a doubt, *De reformatione virium anime* was an influential work. Forty manuscripts survive. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century it was printed in at least six different editions. It was read in and outside the *Devotio Moderna*, in religious communities of different orders throughout the Low Countries and central Europe. In view of this it is odd that until now no modern edition has been available. Unfortunately that lack is typical of *Devotio Moderna* research. Though the movement has been studied since the nineteenth century, there are still many blanks, especially as far as editions are concerned. The series in which this volume appears attempts to correct this problem. Apart from *De reformatione virium anime*, it has published two other volumes that contain writings by major authors from the movement, Geert Grote and Florens Radewijns.

Like them, Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen belonged to the first generation of the *Devotio Moderna*. He was a member of the semireligious community that Florens Radewijns had created in his own house. A prolific author, he was to become an influential figure in and outside the *Devotio Moderna*, despite the fact that he died in his early thirties (in 1398). Among his devotional works, *De spiritualibus ascensionibus* was even more popular than *De reformatione virium anime*; it survives in over a hundred manuscripts. Besides such devotional works, Zerbolt wrote a defense of the lifestyle of his brothers, since they were being attacked for attempting to create a new monastic order, which had been forbidden ever since the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). Another important work is the *De Teutonicis libris*, in which Zerbolt advocates the view that "illiterates" (people who did not have Latin) should read religious books in the vernacular.

The present treatise is a handbook for religious, which starts with an allegorical explanation of the opening sentence of the parable of the Good Samaritan: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho" (Luke 10.30). According to Zerbolt, this is an image of the Fall. Like the traveler from Jerusalem to Jericho, Adam and all his offspring went from righteousness and innocence to misery and instability. The challenge is to return to the primary state of bliss. The reformation of the faculties of the soul is a first step to accomplish that goal. According to Zerbolt, these faculties—understanding (*intellectus*), memory (*memoria*), and will (*voluntas*)—had been diverted from their original focus on God. Zerbolt's treatise aims to liberate them from the stain of carnality, so as to make room for an all-encompassing desire for God. This is a condition for a successful journey to Jerusalem.

In the following sections Zerbolt proceeds through a step-by-step reformation of the soul. His treatise consists of fifty-nine chapters, in which five issues are addressed. He starts by recommending self-knowledge; that is, consciousness of one's own faults helps in the training of the faculties of the soul. After that, he treats the three faculties separately, explaining how each of them can be put in order. Afterwards, he deals with the seven capital sins. In this part he informs the reader about the danger that the sins present and gives advice on how to fight them. The last chapter concludes with some final recommendations.

De reformatione virium anime is typical of the how-to-do-it books that authors of the *Devotio Moderna* wrote. It is very detailed. For instance, the understanding is to be trained

by the reading of holy books, notably Scripture, but Zerbolt does not leave it at that. He goes on to explain how one should go about it: one should set regular times for reading; one should read books from start to finish, and so on. In the section about memory he gives a detailed list of proper subjects for meditation. Fairly typical, too, is Zerbolt's insistence on community life: in view of the way in which the faculties of the soul have become corrupted, one needs one's fellow brothers to remain on the right track. Another typical feature is Zerbolt's reliance on authorities from the early church. To prove his points he quotes extensively from Augustine, Jerome, and others. He also uses more recent authors dear to the *Devotio Moderna*, among them David of Augsburg and Bernard of Clairvaux. The huge success of this particular book, topped only by *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*, can be explained by its practicality and its lively, direct style. By directly addressing the reader as "you should do this" or "you should keep in mind that," the author makes it all but impossible for the reader to stay out of the project that every man and woman should engage in: the journey to Jerusalem.

The editor is to be recommended for providing an edition and translation of this most important and interesting text. Nevertheless, translating is always a risky project. Though the translation seems generally adequate, I am unhappy about some inconsistencies. Why, for instance, translate *intellectus* first as *esprit* ("spirit" as in c. 1) and in the rest of the volume as *entendement* ("understanding")? The latter is much closer to the mark. Furthermore, it is important to stay as close to the original as possible, not only insofar as the meaning of words is concerned, but also in giving a view of the way in which the author thought. For instance, in the chapter on lust (c. 47), Zerbolt warns against lust's *filia* or "daughters," for instance, blindness and inconstancy. Why translate this as *rejetons* (the more gender-neutral "scions" or "offspring"), especially in view of the fact that the *filia* of other vices are given as *filles* ("daughters")? Otherwise, this book has everything a proper edition should have: detailed information on extant manuscripts and prints, an account of the history of the text, and an extensive apparatus, which gives variants on the text and detailed information on Zerbolt's sources. Another useful feature is the introduction to this volume by the Utrecht medievalist José van Aelst. This gives a good overview of Zerbolt, his works, and his context.

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